

Illinois Central Railroad, Freight Depot
(LaSalle Freight Depot)
North of First Street, East of Union Street
LaSalle
LaSalle County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-23-A

HAER
ILL
50-LASAL,
4A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

**Illinois Central Railroad: LaSalle Freight Depot
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HAER No. IL-23-A

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50-LASALLE,
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Location: North of First Street and east of Union Street
LaSalle, LaSalle County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.325430 N.4577310
Quad: LaSalle

Date of Construction: 1857

Builder: Illinois Central Railroad

Present Owner: Illinois Central Gulf Railroad

Present Status: Abandoned

Significance: The LaSalle Freight Depot is one of the few surviving structures associated with the original Illinois Central Railroad. Although it was modified in 1919 to serve as a locomotive repair shop, the building retains much of its ante-bellum appearance, including its well-crafted random-range stone masonry walls.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked in an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100-mile length of the corridor. Identified in the HAER Inventory of the Heritage Corridor, the LaSalle Freight Depot was the subject of a measured drawing and photographic project in 1986. Editing of the short history of the depot and preparing captions for the photographs occurred in 1992.

Historians: Gray Fitzsimons and Michael Drasnin, 1986.

The LaSalle Freight Depot was built in 1857 by the Illinois Central Railroad, one of the region's earliest railroads, and the building is one of the few surviving ante-bellum railroad structures in the Heritage Corridor. The depot was constructed with sandstone and dolomitic limestone that probably came from Joliet. The freight depot was converted into a locomotive repair shop in 1919. The structure has been abandoned for several years. However, the building retains much of its original appearance despite its poor condition. In 1917 the Illinois Central Railroad began construction of a second freight depot one-half block north of the original freight depot. (This second freight depot was destroyed by fire in 1986.) At one time, the Illinois Central Railroad maintained a series of sidings to the east of the brick freight house; these have since been abandoned.

The original freight depot is a two-and-one-half-story building measuring approximately 100' x 40'. The depot has random-range limestone and sandstone walls and pilasters. Timber Queen-post roof trusses with mortise and tenon connections support timber purlins. The building contains four-over-four-light and eight-over-eight-light wood, double-hung, sash windows. The windows are spanned by large limestone lintels and contain limestone sills. Some of the window openings are now bricked up. The north facade contains large double doors which extend two stories in height; one of the doors is now boarded shut. The stonework features ornate quoins and ornamental capitals on top of the pilasters. The interior contains two railroad tracks, each with a mechanic's pit, added when the depot was converted to an engine house. One of the pits has been filled in. The building has a concrete floor, plastered stone walls, and exposed roofing members.

The second Illinois Central Freight Depot at LaSalle was a long, narrow, brick building, measuring approximately 120' x 30'. The building contained eleven bays, was one-and-one-half-stories tall and rested on a concrete foundation. The medium-pitched, gable roof was constructed of timber and iron Howe trusses supporting 10" x 12" timber purlins and 2" x 10" timber rafters. The wood tongue-and-groove roofing was covered with tar. The building was destroyed by fire in 1986.

SOURCES:

Sanborn Map Co., LaSalle, Illinois (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1888, 1892, 1898, 1906, 1911, 1926).

Carlton J. Corliss, Main Line of Mid-America: The Story of the Illinois Central (New York: Creative Age Press, 1950).

SOURCES (continued)

The Past and Present of LaSalle County, Illinois (Chicago: H.F. Kett & Co., 1877), 301.

Warner & Beers, Atlas of LaSalle County and the State of Illinois (New York: Warner & Beers, 1876), 74.

State Public Utilities Commission of Illinois, Railroad Map of Illinois, 1916.